

Jonah Fertig-Burd
DURHAM
LD 785

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to support LD 785 an act to enact the remaining recommendations of the task force on changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implement Act. LD 785 would implement changes recommended by a bipartisan task force to the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA), and in doing so, ensure that the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Mi'kmaq Nation, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians enjoy the same rights and authority as other federally-recognized Indian Tribes across the country.

LD 395 amends MICSA and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act so that the Wabanaki Nations can benefit from most existing and future federal laws that apply to the more than 570 other federally recognized tribes. Currently under the Settlement Acts, when Congress passes federal legislation for tribes nationwide, Wabanaki tribes must be explicitly written into each federal law to benefit from it. The Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes to be treated in this way.

Recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty is essential for restoring the rights and abilities of the Tribes in Maine to access and care for land, regulate natural resources and land use on Tribal lands, and provide for the needs of their communities. In addition to these bills advancing fairness and equity for Wabanaki Nations, a 2022 report from the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development documents how restoring Wabanaki self-governance capabilities and ensuring access to federal self-determination policies and funding for Wabanaki Nations would strengthen the capacity of the Wabanaki Nations to create greater economic opportunities for the Tribes as well as surrounding non-tribal communities of rural Maine.

Sincerely,
Jonah Fertig-Burd